

Internal Systems for Student Success

LEARNINGS FROM OUR PARTNER SCHOOLS



The Starpath team has been busy visiting its partner schools collecting knowledge about internal systems.

All Phase Three partner schools were visited by members of the Starpath team to engage in a conversation about how school systems contribute to student achievement, and if internal systems created any barriers to student success.

"We asked a series of questions about processes to review course design, opportunities to learn for University Entrance literacy, and availability of course information to academic counsellors, students and their whānau," says Joy Eaton, Director of Schools Engagement.

"Additionally we discussed the school's review decisions, constraints and subject clashes for the senior timetable, and what process is followed for withdrawing students from an achievement standard, be it internal or external."

Course Design Review

Overall there was considerable variability of internal practice amongst the nine partner schools. We wanted to know if schools had thorough checking processes in place for reviewing senior course design, such as how they checked courses met UE requirements; that opportunities to learn for UE literacy were identified; and that what is indicated in course booklets/outlines was in fact delivered.

Responses were mixed. Only five schools confirmed that they do have satisfactory procedures in place, and comments ranged from having a "refined process" in place to "it could be done more effectively".

For those schools that indicated more work needed to be done, we were able to gain an insight into why, such as a lack of clear processes and access to information.

Timetable Constraints

We talked to schools about flexibility around timetable structure for the senior school. Most reported timetabling was student driven and that subject clashes affected few senior students.

A range of processes were used by schools to review decisions made about the school timetable. These include results analysis, feedback from HODs, discussion with senior curriculum groups, and gathering and using student voice. Some schools commented that this process is ongoing.

Withdrawing Students from Achievement Standards

We wanted to find out if schools have a process in place for the withdrawal of students from internal and/or external achievement standards, whether whānau are consulted about this and who makes the final decision. Four partner schools have robust procedures in place, although two schools have become aware that some teachers are not following the required process.

Conclusions

While we were pleased to find some schools had robust checking procedures in place, the exercise has highlighted that there is plenty of room for improvement.

In particular there remains a need to maximise the potential for students to gain UE and in emphasising the importance of opportunities to learn for UE literacy through course design.

It was also noted that small partner schools face particular challenges, such as budget constraints and limited staffing resources.

Those schools which do have established processes need to ensure that regular compliance checks take place. Some schools are aware of gaps in their systems and have a desire to create sustainable practice.

Starpath also recommends that all schools check that achievement standards which contribute to UE literacy are in fact being delivered to students in Years 12 and 13.

We are extremely grateful to all of our partner schools who took part in this process. There is potential for Starpath to deliver PLD to middle leaders in partner schools on course design and the results of our conversations will be used to inform this.

From the Director

THANK YOU AND FAREWELL



Starpath is now well into Phase 3 and we continue to learn valuable lessons around improving Māori and Pasifika students' success. These emerging lessons have been shared with each of our partner schools through feedback on our observations, but there is a further

opportunity for Starpath to look across all the schools to try and understand patterns within Northland and South Auckland. We hope to share these lessons more broadly with the education sector through our publications and research. Starpath remains committed to an evidence based approach to educational achievement for those students traditionally excluded from higher education. We can make a difference to this with your ongoing help.

As to myself, I have a new role within the University of Auckland as Director for the Atlantic Fellowship for Social Equity. This is an exciting role working closely with Melbourne University, Queensland University of Technology, Aboriginal peak organisations, Iwi, business and the Commonwealth Government of Australia, along with many other stakeholders on both sides of the Tasman.

In addition, at the end of the year I will be relocating to Tai Tokerau to take up the role as Director of that campus, based just off Rust Ave in Whangarei. There are real opportunities here for development of a 21st century learning focus that would benefit the whole of the north. I look forward to working with many of you in making this dream a reality to benefit the families and children of Tai Tokerau.

As such, my role will be filled by another highly respected academic with leadership, vision and passion for Starpath. Dr Melinda Webber, who worked on the Project between 2011 and 2014, takes up the position of Director of Starpath. We have included a brief introduction to Melinda in this newsletter. Thank you all for the privilege of being able to work with you on this fantastic project.

Professor Cindy Kiro

Meet our new Director

The Starpath Project is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr Melinda Webber as its new Director.

Melinda is a Māori researcher, 2016 Marsden grant recipient and former Fulbright/Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga scholar who has published widely on the nature of Māori identity. Melinda's research examines the ways race, ethnicity, culture and identity impact the lives of young people particularly Māori students. Melinda spent four years working as a researcher on The Starpath Project, from 2011-2014, identifying and addressing the barriers that prevent participation and success in degree-level education especially for Māori, Pacific,

and other students from low socio-economic communities. She also spent six years as a co-principal investigator on the Ka Awatea Project examining the nature of teaching, learning and home socialisation patterns that support high-achieving Māori students in New Zealand. Melinda is competent in te reo Māori and has been involved in a range of research projects in Māori communities.

Melinda formally takes up the Director's role in January 2017.



Dr Melinda Webber – Ngāti Whakaue, Ngāti Kahu, Ngāti Hau

Australian Approaches to Literacy

As part of her own professional learning and development, Starpath team member Tania Linley-Richardson visited two schools in Melbourne in July to learn more about literacy approaches and interventions in Australian secondary education.

The schools she visited were both large, low socioeconomic, co-educational schools in suburban south-east Melbourne. She spent time with two literacy coaches at Fountain Gate Secondary College and the senior leader with responsibility for literacy at Dandenong High School.

Fountain Gate Secondary College uses a number of different literacy interventions in years 7-9, including a year-long trial of the iLit programme from Pearson Education with two small Year 7 classes and reciprocal teaching with all Year 7 classes. The interventions are funded through a federal government fund designed to ensure all children are educated in properly resourced schools. The funding is needs-based and can be used by schools to employ specialist teachers to help improve student outcomes in areas such as literacy and numeracy.

Both literacy coaches at Fountain Gate have Master's qualifications in literacy. They have not had a formal job description for their role. They hold the position of Lead Teacher which means they earn considerably more than other colleagues with additional responsibilities, such as the HOD English. They also both have generous time allowances, for example ten non-contacts across a fortnight for the coach

who is employed on a 0.6 basis. Their time is split between teaching (often the literacy intervention classes), completing tasks delegated by a senior leader, supporting colleagues and working with data.

Contrasting this model of literacy intervention is the approach at nearby Dandenong High School, which has the largest number of refugee students of any secondary school in Australia and a roll of 2,000. This school is moving away from literacy interventions to concentrate on all teachers being teachers of literacy. It has decoding classes for EAL students and a Literacy Action Committee, which is a team of leaders with responsibility in literacy, numeracy, transition, EAL programmes and teaching and learning. This group is regarded as a data team with a detailed action plan for leading, developing and implementing strategies across the school to improve student achievement. These leaders also provide professional development in using PAT data. This school is using an online e-Writing PAT which assesses spelling, grammar and punctuation.

We are extremely grateful to both Dandenong and Fountain Gate schools for allowing Tania to observe their literacy approaches.



Staff Updates

A warm welcome to the new members of the Starpath team, Kapua O'Connor and Tulia Thompson.

Kapua (Ngāti Kuri) joined The Starpath Project midway through 2016 after completing a Master's of Teaching (Primary) at the University of Auckland/Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau. Prior to that he completed a Bachelor of Arts (majoring in English Literature and Sociology) at Victoria University of Wellington/Te Whare Wānanga o te Ūpoko o te Ika a Māui.

His main involvement in the Starpath Project is collecting student and whānau voice. He is also studying part-time completing a Certificate of Proficiency in Education, looking at students travelling from Far North communities to secondary school.

Tulia has joined the team as a part-time research assistant. She has a PhD in Sociology and a Master's degree in creative writing, both from the University of Auckland. Her main interest is creative writing and Pasifika narratives. She has published a book for 9-12 year olds called Josefa and the Vu (Huia 2007).



Kapua O'Connor - Ngāti Kuri

Partners' Day 2016

The Starpath School Partners' Day was a wonderful opportunity for further learning for both our team and our teaching colleagues. Representatives from the nine partner schools engaged in a reflection of the Phase Three work in their school this year and looked to future directions for 2017.

Professor Christine Rubie-Davies from the Faculty of Education and Social Work delivered a presentation on her research into teacher expectations. An examination of the behaviours of high and low expectation teachers proved to be very thought-provoking. Onehunga High School's Associate Principal, Gareth Leadbeater, demonstrated the school's new online Course Selector Tool – a practical digital format for students to make their option selections. You can explore this tool at:

<http://my.ohs.school.nz/course-selector-2017/course-selector/>

An interesting topic of discussion was how unconscious bias affects school decisions such as curriculum design, academic advice and classroom practice. Unconscious bias is a



Teachers and leaders from Starpath's Partner Schools gathered to hear research presentations and discuss future directions.

form of cognitive short-cutting, and is something we all engage in. The role of a professional is to recognise and understand how to minimise this where it impacts children and their families' learning. We also considered a framework for understanding equity traps and

possible strategies for minimising them.

The presentations and resources from our Partners' Day will be published on our website. We encourage you to read through them and discuss with your staff and colleagues.

Research Update: Academic Conversations

Our research team has completed a total of 121 observations and recorded 18 hours of academic conversations across Phase 3 Starpath schools in the second half of this year.

Here are some of the key findings across all nine schools.

General talk

Teachers do a lot of talking! Across all conversations, teachers spoke 73% of the time. Students only spoke 18% of the time, and parents were the majority speaker only 4% of the time. We encourage mentors to reflect on approaches that make whānau aware of how valuable their insights and contributions are, and how to provide them with an adequate understanding of NCEA to ensure that they feel comfortable participating in the conversations.

Conversations about achievement

Almost all conversations contained some mention of the student's achievement; although this was sometimes (39%) quite limited to general comments (e.g., "you're doing well"). In contrast, some conversations included a great deal of specific achievement data, and 41% of talk about achievement was based on student's specific credit counts. Sometimes questions were raised about the accuracy of the data used in the conversation. It is important for all academic conversations to be data-driven, and more specific identification of student's current achievement enables students

to be aware of where they need to focus their efforts.

Conversations about goals and targets

Most academic conversations (82%) included comments about student's goals, most of which (57%) were long-term and about future employment. Others were medium term goals about achievement for the current year, e.g., "get level 2" (38%), and 11% included specific short-term goals for behaviour. Few conversations included strategies to meet goals and targets. We encourage teachers to support students by discussing next steps for learning and agreeing on actions to be taken to meet specific targets.

Conversations about University Entrance

75% of conversations with Year 13 students included some mention of University Entrance. In total, 46 students (38%) explicitly stated an aspiration to go to university, or achieve a certificate endorsement.

We would like to thank all teachers, students and whānau that allowed us to observe these important conversations. In 2017 we have more research activities planned and look forward to working with our schools again.

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou
Victoria mātou ko Tania, ko Kapua, ko Heidi.

Starpath Toolkit Update

Starpath makes its resources and findings freely available to any school to use via the online Starpath Toolkit.

We are continually adding to this valuable resource. This term we have added a number of items including guides to University Entrance requirements and exam literacy.

University Entrance is the highest qualification that can be obtained at secondary schools and it is important all students are able to pursue this.

As well as gaining NCEA Level 3 students must achieve the correct number of credits in literacy, numeracy and in approved subjects.

The University of Auckland has additional requirements too, which are all covered in the Toolkit's Academic Conversations – Two Way Conversations section.

We have also added an exam literacy document with hints and tips to help teachers prepare students to do well in exams.

About us

Starpath is an evidence-based whole school intervention focused on transforming educational outcomes for New Zealand students. The project has concentrated on Māori, Pasifika and low income students who are under-represented in degree level study.

[Find out more](#)



The Starpath Project Toolkit

An online resource for secondary schools implementing Starpath's strategies to raise student achievement.



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For example, understanding exactly what academic verbs mean, such as 'state', 'justify' and 'draw'; reading under pressure; and what to do on the day of an exam.

We are pleased to hear a number of schools across New Zealand have been accessing this knowledge and bringing it directly into the classroom.

See www.starpathtoolkit.auckland.ac.nz

Starpath Advisory Board

The role of the Starpath Advisory Board is to review findings and give advice about work in schools, as well as to contribute ideas to the direction of future work in Phase Three.

Members of the Advisory Board are:

Professor Graeme Aitken – Dean, Faculty of Education and Social Work

Professor Cindy Kiro – Director of Starpath

Dennis Matene - Director, Schools Partnership Office, University of Auckland

Associate Professor Damon Salesa - School of Pacific Studies, University of Auckland

Robin Staples – Principal, Southern Cross Campus

Professor Michael Walker - School of Biological Sciences, University of Auckland

Leanne Webb – Associate Principal, Aorere College.

IN THE NEWS

As well as fulfilling the research needs of the Starpath project, our academics also play a role in contributing to debate on equity in New Zealand.

All of our staff members are passionate about education and achieving more for Māori and Pasifika students.

They are often called upon by the media for comment, and in September we were proud to see University of Auckland academic Dr Earl Irving on the front page of the *New Zealand Herald*.

Dr Irving was a quantitative researcher on Phases One and Two. He spoke about the different opportunities given to low-decile students under NCEA compared with students from more affluent, Pakeha and Asian backgrounds.

"It's not that all youngsters from low-decile schools are going to go to university. It's making sure that those who are capable of doing it do get the chance," he told the *New Zealand Herald*.

"Otherwise you risk ending up with a low-wage economy. Yes, they can get a job, but what about their lifetime outcomes?"



Dr Irving was able to go into more detail in a follow-up interview on Newstalk ZB about the positives and negatives of our current NCEA system.

"There is no reason why a Maori or Pasifika youngster or child from a low-decile school cannot go to University," he said.

Starpath has an incredible depth of knowledge about the workings of NCEA and the experience of students and teachers in low decile schools.

We are pleased to see the media engaging in debate about equity in education and calling on Starpath to contribute to the discussion.



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The Starpath Project for Tertiary Participation and Success, is a partnership between The University of Auckland and the New Zealand Government. The Project works in partnership with schools to transform educational outcomes for students who are currently under-achieving at secondary school and, as a result, under-represented in tertiary education.

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